

Message

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Sent: 10/8/2019 6:27:43 PM
To: Miller, Amy [Miller.Amy@epa.gov]; Quast, Sylvia [Quast.Sylvia@epa.gov]
Subject: EE news article: Democrats slam Wheeler for 'weaponizing' agency

From: Adamic, Denise <Adamic.Denise@epa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 08, 2019 11:21 AM
To: Glenn, William <Glenn.William@epa.gov>; PerezSullivan, Margot <PerezSullivan.Margot@epa.gov>; Calvino, Maria Soledad <Calvino.Maria@epa.gov>; DIAZ, ALEJANDRO <Diaz.Alejandro@epa.gov>; Maier, Brent <Maier.Brent@epa.gov>; Gill, Sonam <Gill.Sonam@epa.gov>
Subject: Fyi EE news article: Democrats slam Wheeler for 'weaponizing' agency

In case you haven't seen this yet . . .

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EPA

Democrats slam Wheeler for 'weaponizing' agency

Ariel Wittenberg, E&E News reporter

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EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. Environment and Public Works Committee

Forty-five House Democrats are urging EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler to work "collaboratively" with the state of California following a "series of politically-motivated attacks."

The letter follows actions EPA has taken over the last month directed at California. Most recently, EPA issued a notice of violation against San Francisco for problems with its sewage collection system.

The letter came after Wheeler sent a letter to Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) telling him the state needed to improve its enforcement of drinking water and sewage regulations, and particularly homed in on alleged violations caused by homeless people in Los Angeles and San Francisco (Greenwire, Oct. 3).

Wheeler has also sent a letter to California air regulators, threatening to revoke federal highway funds in retaliation for the state's halting compliance with the Clean Air Act.

And EPA has taken steps to revoke the state's Clean Air Act waiver for greenhouse gases, which allows for tougher vehicle emission standards.

"It appears that the White House is not interested in using the EPA's authority to protect public health, but instead weaponizing the agency to target political opponents," the letter says.

"Congress will exercise its full authority to ensure your agency has not acted in an arbitrary fashion," wrote the lawmakers, all from California. "We strongly urge you to rethink your approach to engaging with our state."

EPA spokesperson Michael Abboud defended the agency in a statement, saying, "Highlighting that California has the worst air quality in the nation along with other serious environmental problems is not a political issue."

He also said California's "inability to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act has been an ongoing challenge, and the failure to properly operate and maintain the City's sewage collection and treatment facilities creates public health risks."

Abboud said, "The Trump administration, unlike the previous administration, will act to protect public health and the environment for all Americans. EPA expects California leaders to share its concern for the protection of public health."

But the California lawmakers say EPA's accusations "demonstrate deep hypocrisy" because of EPA's recent "pattern of undermining bedrock environmental laws."

"The actions of your agency do not match your rhetoric," the letter says. "To point the finger at the State of California while intentionally weakening environmental protections is outrageous and runs counter to the goal of ensuring clean air and water for all Americans."

The letter highlights California's history of environmental leadership, noting that it created emissions standards for automobiles in the 1960s — before the federal Clean Air Act was enacted — and describes measures that Los Angeles has taken recently to handle stormwater.

"The EPA, on the other hand, has worked to defund key federal environmental and public health programs, undermine Clean Water Act protections, weaken fuel economy rules and revoke California's waiver to set stronger greenhouse gas emissions standards," the letter says.

EPA's actions have also come under fire in the Senate, with California Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris urging EPA's inspector general to look into the allegations about San Francisco's sewer system ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 4).